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Promotion and protection of the rights of children

Letter dated 28 September 1999 from the Permanent Representative of Iceland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

In my capacity as Chairman of the Group of the Nordic Permanent Representatives to the United Nations, I have the honour to forward to you a copy of the Declaration against the Use of Child Soldiers, signed by the Foreign Ministers of the five Nordic countries, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, on 29 August 1999 in Egilsstadir, Iceland (see annex).

It would be highly appreciated if this document could be circulated as an official document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 112.

(*Signed*) Thorsteinn **Ingólfsson**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex

Declaration by the Nordic Foreign Ministers against the Use of Child Soldiers

Children shall not be soldiers and have no part in armed conflicts.

We, the signatories of this Declaration,

Aware that more than 300,000 children are actively involved in today's armed conflicts,

Proclaim our genuine conviction that children shall be protected from taking any part in armed conflict;

Noting that the protection of children in armed conflict given in existing international conventions is insufficient and that international standards must be raised,

Attach crucial importance to the work of the United Nations Working Group on a draft optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child of the involvement of children in armed conflict in order to strengthen the protection of children;

Acknowledge the practical and promotional work done in the field by States, the United Nations and other international and regional organizations as well as by non-governmental organizations;

Undertake to support the urgent finalization of an optional protocol on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child;

Are determined to have an optional protocol stipulating:

- That States parties shall ensure that persons below the age of eighteen years are not recruited into their armed forces or allowed to take any part in hostilities;
- That States parties to the protocol shall take all feasible measures to [ensure] that persons below the age of eighteen years shall not be recruited into armed groups distinct from government forces, or be allowed to take any part in their hostilities;
- That the regulations shall be applicable in both international and internal armed conflicts;

Finally urge all States and organizations to join in the efforts to end the use of children as soldiers.

Signed at Egilsstadir on 29 August 1999.

Niels Helveg **Petersen**
Denmark

Tarja **Halonen**
Finland

Halldor **Asgrimsson**
Iceland

Knut **Vollebaek**
Norway

Anna **Lindh**
Sweden